

Newell, L. E. (2006). *Romblomanon Dictionary*. Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines.

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Since the publication of Leonard E. Newell's *Ifugao vocabulary* in 1958, there have been considerable works related to lexicography by the same author of the work currently reviewed. Newell's extensive research on Batad Ifugao enormously contributed to Philippine linguistics in general. The current work, *Romblomanon dictionary*, is another significant contribution both in the fields of lexicography and linguistics as it is the pioneering work on Romblomanon, a member of the Central Philippine languages of the Bisayan group.

The preliminaries and additions of this 853-paged dictionary are as significant as the word listing itself. The *Preface* contains essential facts necessary to the understanding of the whole work. Not only does it provide a brief description of the language, Romblomanon, and the place, Romblon, it also presents facts about the project such as data collection, sources of words, roles of informants, research methodologies, goals of the project, including suggestions and recommendations. Hence, such inclusion multiplies the credibility of the work.

Next, the *Introduction* presents the format of the dictionary such as the extent and order of lexical coverage, the order of entries, usage and context, and other description of the accompanying facts of the entry words. With such, the user of the dictionary is well-guided with the conventions that accompany the entries.

Additionally, a concise discussion of the phonology and grammar of Romblomanon provides a comprehensive overview of the language which is imperative for a full appreciation of the work. The discussion of phonology is succinct and appropriate. For instance, the consonants are divided into obstruents and sonorants instead of the usual basis of articulation such as stops, affricates, etc. since the language does not have affricates and fricatives. It would have been more informative though if the matrices of word patterns included glosses of the native words.

On the other hand, the discussion of grammar revolves around the four major parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) which come with brief descriptions and example sentences. Although pronominals are subsumed under noun phrases, they are not discussed following the current trend in Philippine linguistics which is the ergative-absolutive

analysis. Similarly, the case marking system and word order have been left out. It would have been more beneficial for both Romblomanon learners and Philippine language researchers if these crucial areas were included so as to figure out the syntax of the language. Although the example sentences throughout the work are authentic texts and none appear contrived, it would have been better if a morpheme-by-morpheme gloss accompanied the Romblomanon texts. The English translations can be awkward sometimes. For instance, the Romblomanon phrase, *kung gustu mu na mag-asawa* (p. 64) is roughly translated as ‘if to take a spouse now **is wanted by you**’ instead of ‘if **you want** to take a spouse now’ since *mu* is used as second person absolutivé here. It is in this light that a three interlinear text, as is the current prevailing fashion in Philippine linguistics, is of great advantage.

The *Appendices* furnish a list of 25 groups of related Roblomanon words or those that belong to the same category such as ‘parts of the house’, ‘social relationships’, ‘sounds of animals’, among others. The *Index*, as the brief description explains, is an English finder’s list that identifies Romblomanon words and phrases that share semantic properties.

One section in the Preliminaries, labelled as ‘Tables,’ is apparently mislaid. This section is neither a part of the Table of Contents nor the Indices, but resembles them in form. The supposed page numbers are Romblomanon words instead. What they represent or where they are located is not very clear in the presentation.

The dictionary comes in manageable size, 6” x 9” x 1 ¾”, and uses mortar and pestle and marble, the major products of Romblon, for its frontispiece. The Romblomanon entries, approximately 20,000, are boldfaced. The lexical glosses are likewise set in boldface, which are either simple translation equivalents or lexical descriptions. Compare how the meanings of these two different entries are provided:

**gisa** *n* A food **is sautéed** by someone.

**gisantis** *n* **green peas**

Each entry is followed immediately by abbreviations in italics following Newell’s categories, as discussed in the grammar section. Aside from the usual *n*, *v*, *adj*, *adv*, there are other complex symbols such as *intg poss pron*, *opt derv pref*, *card num adj*, among others. It is sometimes confusing how a certain entry is categorized as such. For instance, **trisi** (p. 568) is followed by the labels *card num adj*, which clearly categorizes the entry as adjective. This label can be misleading since numerals do not necessarily behave as adjectives. It is for this reason that I strongly recommend that numbers be treated separately (cf. Dita, 2007). As Zorc (2004) points out, numerals apparently are special forms of nominals.

Some entries, however, are not followed by italicized abbreviations, e.g., **nagalatun**, **naglatunlatun** (p. 332). Whether these words have multiple

functions and should therefore be inappropriate to label them with the usual conventions is not clear to the reviewer. There are also some words that appear as phrases but not as individual entries. For instance, there is **imirdyinsi nga kwarta n occupation money** but there is no single entry for **imirdyinsi**. This could give the wrong impression that **imirdyinsi** roughly translates to 'occupation.'

Although the introduction mentions that etymology is not treated in the dictionary, the inclusion of foreign words in Filipino spelling may appear ludicrous especially to a non-Bisayan speaker. Consider the following entries:

**kuliplawir n cauliflower**

**pradyik n project**

**purt ord num fourth**

**sibin card num seven**

A truly commendable aspect of the dictionary is the organization of words. The extent of meanings and sense distinction are done methodically. The listing of various affixed forms of the root entry allows the user to compare the possible derivations of a root word for semantic and grammatical information. If derivations are not handled this way, it would have been impossible for the user to locate all the possible forms of a particular root word. In addition, the provision of special features such as contrast in senses, as represented by numbers and letters, cross references in parentheses, semantic and cultural notes in braces, and special uses in square brackets, is truly useful and beneficial to the users of the dictionary.

Likewise, the author should be credited for a negligible typographical error: 'songe' for 'sponge' on page 679. Also, the table of verb affixes on page 39 is labelled as Figure 3.

Newell's work has just set a pattern for future dictionaries of any Philippine language. It is indeed a challenge to all Philippinists to come up with a dictionary such as Newell's for those languages that have been described.

## REFERENCES

- Dita, S. N. (2007). *A reference grammar of Ibanag*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, De La Salle University-Manila.
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